

CRITICAL SKILL SHORTAGES:
NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

A brief to the
Parliamentary Task Force
on
Employment Opportunities for the 80s

by the

Canadian Advisory Council
on the Status of Women

January 1981

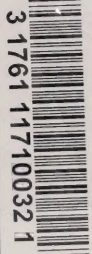


**Canadian Advisory Council
on the Status of Women**

Box 1541 Station B, Ottawa K1P 5R5

**Conseil consultatif canadien
de la situation de la femme**

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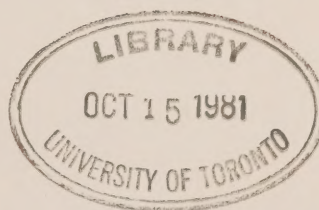
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I. Introduction: Women Need Opportunities

When one reviews the situation of women in the labour force today, there can be no doubt that women need expanded employment opportunities now and will continue to need them throughout the 1980s. Women not only suffer from higher unemployment than men (8.8% compared to 6.6% in 1979¹), but they are also segregated into a limited number of occupations, while a far broader range of employment opportunities are available to men. In 1979, 62.1% of women in the work force were confined to just three occupational categories - clerical, sales and service.² Women in the paid labour force today still only earn, on average, 62% of what men earn.³ Occupational segregation and the undervaluing of women's work generally are in large measure responsible for the continuing wage gap between the sexes, but outright discrimination is by no means dead yet in this country.

1 Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, December 1979, (Ottawa: 1980) Table 56, p. 70.

2 Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, December 1979, Table 68, p. 84.

3 Statistics Canada, Income Distribution by Size in Canada, 1977, (Ottawa: 1977), Table 70, p. 131.

There is evidence to suggest that these disadvantages are worsening⁴ and forecasts for the future are bleak. Government cutbacks in health, social services and within its own offices, combined with dropping enrolment in schools, have all affected women's traditional occupations adversely, and will continue to do so. Even more disastrous could be the effects of technological change. Studies from several industrial countries have predicted enormous displacement rates for the 1980s as a result of computerization, particularly in clerical and secretarial work.⁵ Meanwhile, women's participation in the labour force continues to increase; it is anticipated that the current participation rate for

4 Lynn McDonald, "Wages of Work: a widening gap between women and men", in Women in Canada, ed. Marylee Stephenson, (Don Mills: General Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 181-191. Pat and Hugh Armstrong, The Double Ghetto, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978). Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Women in the Public Service: Barriers to Equal Opportunity, (Ottawa: 1979); Women in the Public Service: Overlooked and Undervalued, (Ottawa: 1980).

5 Simon Nora, and Alain Minc, L'informatisation de la société, (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1978). This French report predicts technological unemployment of 12-14%. Japan Information Processing Development Centre, "The Impact of Microelectronics on Employment", Jipdec Report, Spring 1980. This study predicts extensive job displacement problems. Stephen A. Peitchinis, Technological Changes and the Demand for Skilled Manpower, Studies on the Employment Effects of Technology, (Calgary: University of Calgary, Department of Economics, 1979). This Canadian study of 102 firms showed that for each new job created by technological change, three workers lost their jobs.

women of 49% will rise to between 65% and 70% by the year 2000.⁶

This is the situation facing women. It also confronts the government if their commitment to equality of opportunity for women is a sincere one.

At the same time, the economy at large is experiencing a shortage of skilled trades workers. Other briefs presented to the Task Force have described the current and anticipated shortages of skilled labour in detail. We will only summarize by saying that Canada now suffers from critical shortages of skilled workers, including millwrights, welders, machinists, tool and die makers, machine tool set-up workers, heavy duty mechanics, and industrial electricians. These occupations are at the present time almost exclusively male preserves. By increasing opportunities for women in the skilled trades the government could reduce substantially the inequality women currently experience in employment.

- Since there are known labour shortages in the skilled trades, the entry of women into these occupations would have the effect of reducing female unemployment.

6 Dan Ciuriak and Harvey Sims, Participation Rate and Labour Force Growth in Canada, (Ottawa: Department of Finance Canada, 1980), Tables 14 and 15, pp. 46-47.

- Women entering these occupations would reduce job segregation and broaden the range of employment opportunities for women.
- Pay rates in the skilled trades are good. Even apprenticeship rates are higher than what most women earn as low-paid clerical, sales and service workers. Consequently, the entry of women into skilled trades occupations would tend to narrow the wage gap between the sexes.

In effect, the federal government has a golden opportunity to use its labour market programmes to achieve two objectives simultaneously, that is to improve the employment status of women while at the same time providing for Canada's skilled labour requirements. One note of caution, however. We are concerned that women may be trained in occupations which will become obsolete in the future as the full effects of the micro-technology revolution are felt. The government must choose carefully the occupations for which special training incentives are to be provided. It would be a tremendous waste of resources and further no objective, to train workers in occupations for which employment opportunities are declining.

II. Problems Facing Women Who Wish to Enter the Trades

In order to determine what action is necessary to increase the number of women in the skilled trades, one must look first at the nature of the barriers currently impeding the participation of women. The major barrier is not the formal qualifications necessary to become an apprentice: one has only to be 16 years old and have between grade 9 and 11 education, depending on the trade. Nevertheless, the obstacles confronting women are very real.

An initial problem is the lack of exposure women have to the idea of entering such occupations, given the prevalent socialization to become a secretary or a nurse rather than an electrician or a welder. In high school, young women are channelled into typing and domestic science; few guidance counsellors provide information on non-traditional areas of work. Often the lack of basic experience with tools and materials presents a great difficulty. Approaching an employer to ask for an apprentice position as an electrician or auto mechanic is considerably more intimidating if you have never built your own stereo set or worked under the hood of a car - and few women have.

A would-be apprentice has to find an employer prepared to hire her. Left to their own devices, employers in private industry have not been training sufficient numbers of skilled trade workers, resulting in the current shortages. This may be due to fears of the costs or administration involved, preference for

the cheaper route of immigration, or notions that apprentice training is a poor investment. Whatever the reasons, such negative attitudes are reinforced by traditional prejudices when it comes to hiring women. Women seeking work in the trades are told point-blank by many employers that they would not hire a woman under any circumstances. The same arguments are often repeated: the work is too hard, conditions are rough, the men already working would oppose the hiring of women, and so on.

Should a woman overcome such obstacles and become an apprentice, the problems are not necessarily over. She usually becomes the only woman on the job and may be subject to pressure from the male workers and supervisors. This may take any form from excessive swearing and crudity to test her reactions, to unusual politeness. The men may insist on giving extra help to the woman at the start, but this can turn into resentment and complaints that she is not doing her fair share. Even where co-workers are supportive, the woman may remain isolated as the token woman on the job. Certainly she is working contrary to current social norms and may be subject to further adverse pressure from family and friends. To their credit, some women remain undeterred.

Despite all these difficulties, we have in Canada's recent history powerful proof not only of women's capabilities in non-traditional skilled labour but also of how quickly barriers can come down if exigencies demand. During World War II, employers

competed to hire women into heavy industry and no job was considered "unsuitable". Instantly the government created a massive campaign to encourage women to join the labour force to replace absent men. Women demonstrated their ability to do work formerly regarded as impossible for them. In this situation, where dozens of women worked together in heavy industry and in an atmosphere where "Rosie the Riveter" became a national heroine, women were not subjected to the isolation and societal disapproval which women in trades face today.⁷

7 Ruth Pierson, "Women's Emancipation and the Recruitment of Women into the Labour Force in World War II", in The Neglected Majority, ed. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), pp. 125-145.

III. The Deficiencies of Current Federal Employment Programmes as They Relate to Women and the Trades

1. Institutional Training

In 1978-79, the federal government spent \$445,315,000 on institutional training compared to \$83,698,000 for on-the-job industrial training.⁸ This emphasis has received considerable criticism for its lack of relevance to labour force requirements.⁹ A large proportion of the training is not within the scope of this brief, since it aims to provide the very basic requirements necessary to enter the work force, such as job search skills, the ability to handle on-the-job relationships, and so on. Occupational skill training and apprenticeship training (dealt with in detail shortly), both programmes within the institutional training framework, do aim at providing trainees with skills relevant to obtaining specific jobs. These two programmes accounted for 81% of all male institutional trainees in 1978-79, but only 54% of

8 Patricia Dale, Women and Jobs: The Impact of Federal Government Employment Strategies on Women, (Ottawa: CACSW, 1980), Appendix II, Table 10-B, p. 15.

9 Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), Interdepartmental Evaluation Study of the Canada Manpower Training Program: Technical Report, (Ottawa: 1977).

female trainees that same year.¹⁰ In other words, 46% of women receiving institutional training were in programmes which would not directly improve their employability. By contrast, only a scant 19% of male trainees were enrolled in such programmes.

Even when women do receive job related training, it is frequently in traditionally female occupations, some of which are destined to experience high unemployment in years ahead. For instance, in 1978-79 one quarter of the skill trainees were enrolled in clerical training; 93% of these clerical trainees were women.¹¹ Since there will be a surplus of clerical workers in the 1980s as a result of technological advances, such training would at best seem to be inappropriate. Of the total 27,500 female skill trainees in 1978-79, just 813 or 3% were training in non-traditional areas.¹² A joint Employment and Immigration Commission/Treasury Board interdepartmental study has found evidence to suggest that most skill trainees are unable to use their skills after the course.¹³

10 Dale, Women and Jobs, Table IV, p. 54.

11 Canada Manpower Training Programs, Training Branch, Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1978-79, (Ottawa: 1979), Table 6.4, p. 76.

12 Ibid., Table 6.4, p. 76.

13 CEIC, Interdepartmental Evaluation.

2. Industrial Training

Industrial training involves on-the-job training where Employment and Immigration Canada (CEIC) contracts with employers to assist in training by reimbursing a portion of the trainees' wages (40% for the upgrading of workers already employed, 60% for unemployed or employment threatened workers and 85% for workers with special needs). This programme is more directly linked to employers' immediate needs, though not necessarily to labour shortages in the skilled trades. The retention rate in this programme is high, 78% of the trainees are still working 18 months after the contract and the subsidy finish. (This is partially explained by the fact that 51% of male trainees and 37% of female trainees were already working for the employer prior to the contract for training).¹⁴

Of the participants in industrial training, only 29% were women in 1978-79¹⁵, so women were under-represented in this programme (being 39% of the work force and 45% of the unemployed in 1978). Moreover, very few women received training in non-traditional work. Occupations with less than 10% female participation are now defined as non-traditional by CEIC and consist of fishing and hunting; forestry and logging; mining and quarrying; machining and related occupations; construction; and transport

¹⁴ Information obtained from the Industrial Training programme, CEIC.

¹⁵ Dale, Women and Jobs, p. 51.

equipment operating. In 1979-80 just 2.5% of all female trainees in the industrial programme were trained in these non-traditional occupations, compared to 28.6% of male trainees.¹⁶

The industrial training programme is of limited usefulness in terms of the skilled trades, because the maximum contract under the programme is for 52 weeks, while training in a skilled trade takes 3-4 years. In 1979-80 just 10.8% of industrial trainees were apprentices and only 8% of these apprentices were women.¹⁷ Other than apprenticeships, it may be that industrial training does provide some low level training in skilled jobs and it certainly provides work experience. It might be a stepping stone towards apprenticeship in a skilled trade. However, given the extremely low proportion of women trainees in non-traditional occupations, the programme cannot be said to provide these advantages to women.

3. Apprenticeship Training

While the apprenticeship programme is formally a component of institutional training (because the federal government in general pays only for the institutional part of the training), it is basically on-the-job training. It is the most relevant programme to the issue of critical skills shortages, since all

16 Information obtained from the Industrial Training programme, CEIC.

17 Information obtained from the Industrial Training programme, CEIC.

the trades in question require a lengthy apprenticeship. In 1978-79, 32% of all participants in institutional training programmes were apprentices - the second largest after skill training.¹⁸ However, as noted earlier, just 3% of these apprentices were women. Of the 55,237 apprentices in 1978-79, only about 1,655 were women. Moreover 74% of all female apprentices were receiving training in traditional service occupations, mostly as cooks and hairdressers.¹⁹

In addition to the appallingly low representation of women, the apprenticeship programme suffers from some very broad and basic problems which cannot be ignored.

There is neither an overall organization nor an overall strategy regarding apprenticeship training in Canada, a failing which results in control being exercised by any number of individual employers. It is employers who decide who to train and how to train. The results have been disastrous for apprenticeship training in general, but for women in particular. Employers are reluctant to hire apprentices, whether male or female. This places the government in the position of 'bribing' or begging employers to take on any apprentices at all and makes it difficult to press for any specifications, such as the employment of

18 Dale, Women and Jobs, p. 52.

19 Dale, Women and Jobs, Appendix II, Table 14, p. 21.

women. The fear is real that if such conditions are placed upon apprenticeship training, already reluctant employers may simply refuse to train apprentices.

The federal government has little real control in this situation. First, there is of course the constitutional question concerning provincial jurisdiction over education. To date the federal government has not attempted to attach any conditions to its financing of the institutional component of apprenticeship training. No doubt such a move would meet with considerable opposition from the provinces. Wealthier provinces (with most industry and most apprentices) might prefer to finance their own programmes rather than submit to federal intervention, particularly since federal financing only covers the institutional component of apprenticeship training - often just 8 weeks per year. Moreover, even the provinces have little control over apprenticeship training. They too are constrained by the fact that it is employers who decide whether or not to train, who their apprentices will be, and in what skills to train. Undoubtedly the provinces could do much more to encourage employers to train women, but in a situation where employers are reluctant to train anyone, the impact is likely to be limited.

4. Critical Trades Skills Training

In response to research indicating the limited relevance of federal training programmes to

Canada's shortages of skilled labour, Critical Trades Skills Training (CTST) was initiated in 1979-80 as part of the industrial training programme. Employers may be reimbursed 50% of an apprentice's wages (up to \$170 per week) for trainees in specific skills where there are known shortages. The trainee may be subsidised for up to 2 years, instead of just 52 weeks. This programme is a direct incentive to employers to provide the lengthy training required for skilled workers. During the first year, the amount expended on this programme was just \$9 million. Although this has been increased to \$30 million for 1980-81, it still accounts for only a small portion of the \$834 million total budget for federal training programmes in 1980-81.

This programme most specifically attempts to meet Canada's current and forecasted labour needs. However, it has no particular mandate to encourage the training of women. As yet the programme is too recent for statistical information to be available on the number of women participants. However, since the choice of apprentice is left with the employer and since the trades involved are all non-traditional for women, it would be surprising if CTST achieves even the lowly 3% female participation rate of the general apprenticeship programme.

5. Non-Traditional Training for Women

In June 1980 the Minister of Employment and Immigration announced a new programme specifically targetted to encourage women to enter non-traditional

trades. The programme falls under the industrial training programme, but provides a wage subsidy of 75% to employers who train women in non-traditional occupations.

The principle of this programme is laudable, since it clearly addresses the whole issue of the reluctance of employers to hire women as apprentices in non-traditional occupations. However, the amount of money allocated to the programme is very small - just \$2 million out of a budget of \$834 million. The background notes on the programme suggest that 1,500 women will be involved in 1980/81.²⁰ It is difficult to see how this figure is reached, since by simple division this produces a sum of only \$30 per participant per week (based on 44 weeks of work, excluding 8 weeks institutional training). This is nowhere near the sum required to finance 75% of an apprentice's wage in a skilled trade. Taking a conservative estimate of \$150 per week as three-quarters of an apprentice's pay, \$2 million provides for just 300 participants for 1980-81.

6. Pre-Trades Courses

In several provinces, short courses are available to women as an introduction to non-traditional trades. They usually last from 6 to 12

20 Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Background Papers - New and Continuing Employment Programs and Training Increases, (Ottawa: June 2, 1980), p. 10.

weeks and include workshop experience in several trades and often an on-the-job component in one trade. The aim of these courses is to provide women with some initial contact with the trades and the tools. This enables women to decide which trade most interests them, and helps build confidence that they are indeed capable of entering a skilled trade. CEIC usually finances the training and refers many of the potential trainees.

Pre-trades courses have proved valuable in several ways. They help to rectify an imbalance created by women's socialization and school experiences, often providing first contact with information about the trades. Since the courses are usually entirely for women, they overcome the isolation and disapproval women frequently experience when they enter non-traditional job training directly. In those programmes which include an on-the-job component, contact between employers and women interested in trades training has proved useful in changing employer attitudes towards ultimately hiring women for skilled trades positions. Once an employer has seen a woman on the job and recognized that she is capable, the reluctance to hire women is frequently reduced.²¹ Women who have graduated from pre-trades courses have generally stated that they found them very useful and

21 I.N.T.O. Program Co-Ordinator, "Job Placement" in INTO: Introduction to Non-Traditional Occupations, (Thunder Bay: Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology, Women's Programs, 1980), p. 37.

appropriate.²² This has not meant however, that graduates have easily found work or apprenticeship positions, since employer opposition remains a major barrier. It is interesting to note that the courses have been generally popular. For example, when the first course was offered in Manitoba in 1976, a small advertisement in a local paper drew 200 applications for 15 places.²³ It seems that there is little problem encouraging women to enter the trades when appropriate training is available.

In 1979-80, 1,097 trainees took pre-trades courses in Canada. Most of the trainees, 843, were in Ontario which has the well-publicized programme Introduction to Non-Traditional Occupations (INTO). Manitoba trained 108, Saskatchewan 70, B.C. 48, New Brunswick 17 and Newfoundland 9. Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia are planning courses for 1980-81, but there are no government sponsored pre-trades courses

22 I.N.T.O. Evaluation Researcher, "Evaluation Research of the Introduction to Non-Traditional Occupations Program", in INTO: Introduction to Non-Traditional Occupations, (Thunder Bay: Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology, Women's Programs, 1980), p. 59-60.

23 Julie White, "Women in Trades Association" in Women and Work: A Resource Kit, (Ottawa: Secretary of State, Women's Programme, 1977), p. 2. Employment and Immigration Canada's Institutional Training section undertook a brief survey of the pre-trades courses at the request of the CACSW. The courses were described as "popular", "becoming increasingly popular".

for women planned or current in Quebec or Alberta.²⁴ Clearly the opportunity for women to undertake pre-trades training is extremely variable. In some provinces it is entirely unavailable and even in those provinces with training programmes, the numbers of trainees are very limited and in many communities the course is not provided.

7. Training Allowances

Full time trainees in the institutional training programme are eligible for a training allowance, which varies according to their marital status and living arrangements, number of dependents, distance from the training centre and geographical location. Since October 1978, changes affecting women have been made to training allowances which have been described as "a half-step forward accompanied by two steps backward".²⁵ The negative changes began when the training allowance was reduced from \$45 to \$10 per week for trainees living with a parent or working spouse. This allowance was subsequently raised to \$20 per week and recently has been raised again, this time to \$25 per week. Still, the net reduction remains a disincentive for married women and young single women living at home to enter institutional training.

The "half-step forward" was the introduction of a dependent care allowance, supposedly with the

24 This information was collected by the Training Branch, CEIC, for the purposes of this brief at the request of the CACSW.

25 Dale, Women and Jobs, p. 55.

intention of enabling women with children to finance alternative care while participating in training courses. Since the provision allows only a meagre \$15-20 per week per dependent (to a maximum of four), it offers virtually no help at all. In addition, no training allowances are provided to part-time trainees; thus women who must share their time between training and their family responsibilities are not encouraged to enter the programme. The barriers these provisions present for women with children are reflected in the fact that in 1978-79, 80% of female institutional trainees did not have dependents.²⁶

8. Affirmative Action

In April 1979, the Affirmative Action programme at CEIC began its operations, with a budget between \$2-3 million. It has 18 regional staff and 6 at headquarters in Ottawa (excluding 4 staff working on affirmative action within the federal Public Service). The mandate of the programme is to provide technical advice and assistance to either private employers or Crown Corporations which are voluntarily prepared to implement an equal opportunity programme within their companies. This is of relevance to the issue of women in skilled trades, because one of the aims of affirmative action is to involve women at all levels and in all jobs within a company, including apprenticeships and skilled trades.

26 Dale, Women and Jobs, p. 59.

To date, only fifteen companies are involved in developing affirmative action plans and none have been implemented as yet. The companies vary in size from 100 employees to several thousand and the businesses include shipyards, a heavy equipment manufacturer, an aerospace company, hotels, electronics assembly plants, a university and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Clearly the skilled trades are important in some of these industries, and it is hoped that apprenticeship training will be carefully scrutinized during the development of affirmative action plans in these cases.

The work of CEIC's affirmative action programme is severely limited by the reluctance of many employers to voluntarily involve their companies in an equal opportunities programme. Clearly, few employers are strongly motivated by altruism, since only 15 have become involved in the affirmative action programme during the year and a half that it has been in place. Certainly at this rate it will take many years before equal opportunities will be implemented in a significant number of industries, particularly equal opportunities for women in the skilled trades.

IV. Suggestions for Programme Improvements

1. Institutional Training

Institutional training courses must be changed to realistically reflect the labour market needs of the 1980s. Specifically, there should be less training in clerical work, which should be replaced both by training in skills required to operate the new office and communications machinery being introduced and by training in non-traditional jobs for women. A more strenuous and co-ordinated effort must be made to increase the number of female trainees receiving non-traditional training. Liaison with pre-trades courses might be an appropriate starting point since graduates from these courses may well be suited to further training in a specific non-traditional skill.

2. Industrial Training

There are currently two programmes within the industrial training framework specifically designed to encourage employers to hire apprentices and to hire women, Critical Trades Skills Training (CTST) and Non-Traditional Training for Women. While the latter provides additional incentives for employers to hire women in non-traditional occupations, the amount of money provided is minimal. At the same time, it is entirely unacceptable that the CTST, the only programme geared to Canada's known labour shortages, should fail to make provisions specifically for women.

The financing for Non-Traditional Training for Women should be increased immediately from its current \$2 million to at least \$10 million. This is estimated as the minimum amount necessary to provide for the 1500 women initially expected to participate in this programme.

As regards the Critical Trades Skills Training programme, a proportion of its budget equivalent to the proportion of women in the labour force (39%) should be allocated to the apprenticeship training of women, and higher subsidies provided for women (75%) than for men (50%) in order to provide an incentive for employers to hire women.

3. Apprenticeship Training

It has been suggested to the Task Force, specifically by the Canadian Labour Congress, that there should be a complete restructuring of the apprenticeship programme along lines similar to the system which operates in several European countries. This would involve a national grant-levy system, whereby all employers would pay a scaled fee into a central fund. Employers training apprentices could then obtain financial support from this fund. In this way employers who do not train apprentices would not escape the financial burden, but would be required to contribute to providing for their labour needs. The central fund would also finance boards composed of employers and unions to plan and implement apprenticeship programmes in an organized fashion.

There would be national and regional boards, as well as boards in particular trades as deemed necessary.

While there may be some distinct advantages to such a scheme, the needs of women would not necessarily be addressed unless the government could guarantee that the following conditions would be met:

1. that women would be represented on those national, regional, and trades bodies organizing apprenticeship programmes according to the proportion of the labour force they represent (39%);
2. that such national, regional, and trades bodies would have as a goal the introduction of women into non-traditional trades according to their proportion in the work force (39%);
3. and that to implement this goal a representative proportion (39%) of money collected under the grant-levy system would be allocated for women's apprenticeship training.

4. Pre-Trades Courses

CEIC should actively initiate pre-trades training courses for women in community colleges across the country, particularly in those provinces where none now exist.

5. Training Allowances

The CACSW would like to reiterate recommendations made in the past relating to training allowances:

- 1) training allowances for trainees living with parents or a working spouse should be reinstated at the former rate of \$45 per week;
- 2) the training allowance system should be reviewed and amended to meet more realistically the financial needs of women, especially women with dependents;

In addition, allowances should be made available to part-time trainees whose family responsibilities make full-time participation impossible.

6. Counselling

In order to ensure that improvements to CEIC's training programmes achieve their maximum success, in every local Canada Employment Centre (CEC), at least one officer should be specially trained to handle issues related to women entering the trades. This officer would work directly with women, encouraging them to enter the trades and providing referrals to pre-trades courses. In addition, this individual would be responsible for working with employers to develop opportunities for women in the skilled trades.

7. Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance

Each year the government has contracts with between 25,000 and 30,000 companies worth \$6.5 billion to private businesses and a further \$5.5 billion to Crown Corporations. To over 300 companies, including General Motors, Imperial Oil, British Petroleum and several large food suppliers, federal government contracts are worth a million or more dollars annually. Since many of these companies employ skilled workers and apprentices, the introduction of mandatory contract compliance would be an important step towards ensuring women their fair share of employment opportunities in the skilled trades.

Under a mandatory contract compliance programme, companies providing goods and services to the government or organizations receiving government grants, would be required to undertake affirmative action or lose their government contracts or funding. The possibility of such a penalty is much more likely to produce positive results than the appeals to conscience which are the basis and the weakness of the existing Affirmative Action programme.

V. Conclusion

Existing federal government programmes have not brought significant numbers of women into non-traditional apprenticeships and/or skilled trades occupations, despite considerable expenditure. Why? First of all, it is clear that large sections of both the institutional and industrial training programmes are not intended to promote training in the skilled trades. In addition, in both programmes women are found almost exclusively in traditional "women's jobs", some of which may be rapidly disappearing in the 1980s with the introduction of technological advances. In the two programmes which involve on-the-job training (industrial training and apprenticeship training), employers choose their own trainees and have proved reluctant to hire women. There is one programme geared specifically to encouraging employers to take on apprentices in skilled trades where there are known shortages (Critical Trades Skills Training), but here there is no provision for encouraging employers to hire women. In the two programmes which might affect employer's hiring practices (Affirmative Action and Non-Traditional Training for Women), the amount of money committed is very small - just \$4-5 million for both programmes when the total training budget is \$834 million.

The major barrier inhibiting the entry of women into skilled trades is the opposition of employers. This has been demonstrated by the graduates of pre-trades courses, women who are interested in the trades, have hands-on experience and yet are unable to

find work.²⁷ If employers were prepared to hire women apprentices, the other requirements (i.e., a sufficient number of women with proper qualifications and experience wanting to enter the trades) would soon be met. As previously stated, in World War II when the absence of men created a demand for female labour, the number of women in the labour force leapt from 638,000 in 1939 to 1,077,000 by 1944 - an increase of 68% in just 5 years!²⁸ Once the demand for women workers existed, there was no lack of women, nor lack of training provided to them. If federal government policies are to improve the opportunities for women in the skilled trades, they must deal directly with employers' hiring practices.

We have before us the prospect of an increasing surplus of female labour in the 1980s; labour which is known to be well qualified and committed to the work force. We also face an increasing shortage of workers in the skilled trades. The opportunity is available to overcome a critical labour shortage, while at the same time promoting equal opportunities for women in the work force. As the Minister for Employment recently stated:

"The time for effective action is now. We have no choice but to move ahead with determination. The 1980s must bring an end to women's social and economic victimization."²⁹

27 White, "Women in Trades Association", p. 7.

28 Pierson, "Women's Emancipation", p. 145.

29 Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Notes for an address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, (Ottawa: 1980). Address presented at the World Conference, Copenhagen, July 15, 1980.

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